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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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SUBJECT: "NOTES ON JELLIES, JAMS, AND PRESERVES." Information from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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To some people breakfast is not breakfast without a little marmalade, or jam, or jelly for hot toast, muffins or waffles. To some people marmalade or some other sweet fruit spread is as much a part of breakfast as coffee. In fact, it's a breakfast habit with so many people that hotels and restaurants often serve a little dish of marmalade or jam with anything you order for breakfast.

Nutrition scientists of the Department of Agriculture are all in favor of a dash of some fruit spread to enliven breakfast or any other meal. Anything that makes bland foods more tempting and helps wake up appetites has a use--in moderation. But nutrition scientists explain that jams, jellies and other fruit spreads are largely sugar. You can easily overdo them if you let your sweettooth have its way. Jams and jellies can't take the place of fresh and canned fruit in the diet. They are rich in sugar, you see, but not in vitamins and minerals as fresh and canned fruits are. So jams and jellies have a place only as relishes--appetizing extras--or little luxuries in food. And this season when you do your canning and preserving, it's worth remembering that canned fruits and vegetables are the mainstays, and jams and jellies are the extras.

Now that the nutrition scientists have explained how jams and jellies fit into a good diet, let's call on the cookery scientists for some tips on making them at home.

Since these extras are to give zest to the meal, you want them to be as nearly perfect as possible. You want them to look and taste beautiful. You want

them to keep as much of the bright natural fruit color and the fine natural fruit flavor as possible. You want your jelly to jell; your preserves to come out clear, tender and translucent; your jams to be thick; your marmalades to be a jellied mixture of fruit and peel; and your fruit butters to be smooth.

Here are some tips to help you get these good results.

First, use only fruits that are in good condition. Never try to make jams or jellies of fruit that has begun to spoil. Fruits slightly underripe are better for jelly than fruit overripe. But you can use very ripe fruit in jam or marmalade as long as it has not begun to mold or decay. Very ripe fruit has more flavor than underripe fruit. Underripe fruit has more of the acid and pectin that you need for jelly.

Second point. Cook all these fruit products as rapidly as possible and in the least possible time. This is to preserve the natural color and flavor. Long slow cooking darkens the color and changes the flavor.

Third point. In order to make the cooking rapid, use a wide shallow kettle that exposes a large surface of the mixture for evaporation. That helps the fruit and sugar boil down fast.

Fourth point. Add the least possible amount of water to fruit. Very juicy fruits like berries and currants usually need have no water added.

Point No.5. Use fruits in the kind of product best adapted to their particular qualities. The best fruits for jelly-making are those that happen to have acid and pectin in the right proportions. These are: currants, gooseberries, blackberries, raspberries, tart apples and crab apples, plums (wild plums and the Wild Goose type of cultivated plums), tart varieties of quinces, and wild native grapes or cultivated grapes such as the Concord.

The best fruits for preserves are those that hold their shape and color.

Examples of good fruits for preserves are: cherries, citron melon, peaches, pears, damson plums, quinces, strawberries, watermelon, tomatoes and figs.

For jams and fruit butters you don't have to be so particular. Fruits that are very ripe, or not very perfect in shape, or too small for other uses make very good jams and butters.

Point No.6. You can get some of the most delicious products by combining different fruits for a blend of flavors. You can make fine jelly by combining the juice of one fruit that lacks pectin or acid with another that supplies the substance, for example, peach and apple. Other good combinations for jelly are: currant and raspberry; gooseberry and raspberry; tart apple with plum; and crab-apple with grape. Very often when you have small amounts of several kinds of fruit you can use them to best advantage by combining them.

Last point: have reliable directions or recipes so you won't waste good time and materials. In these emergency times you need to take extra care to make good use of good food, and to put it up so that it will be most delicious and will keep well. The Department of Agriculture has a bulletin on homemade jellies, jams and preserves. It is free while the free supply lasts. Write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. for Farmers' Bulletin No. 1800 called "Homemade Jellies, Jams and Preserves."

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